

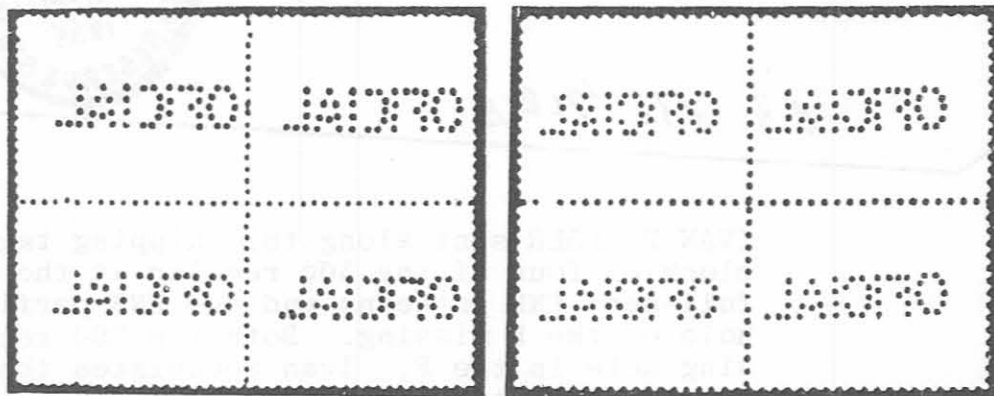
About those Guatemala officials

Here are some answers to the questions we posed in the March *Bulletin* about Guatemala officials. The information comes from our foreign catalog coordinator, Bob Schwerdt, who cites the *Guatemala Handbook* as his source.

On October 31, 1911, according to Schwerdt, the president of Guatemala authorized the payment of 13 pounds, 5 shillings, to Waterlow & Sons, London, for a foot pedal press "which will serve to perforate stamps destined for franking official correspondence to the exterior." On April 10, 1912, he issued a decree which stated that all postage stamps for the franking of correspondence from the government directed to the exterior "shall be perforated with the word *OFICIAL*."

When the perforating machine was put into use, government offices submitted requisitions as stamps were needed and supplies were prepared accordingly, so there were no formal issue dates. The first use was probably in 1912, however.

The machine perforated blocks of four stamps at a time. Initially the perforator produced a 7-hole C in each of the four positions. But the perforator was damaged in the earthquake of 1917 and sent back to England for repairs. When it was returned (sometime around the end of 1924), the C in one position had eight holes, but the C in the other three positions each had nine holes--due in each case to the addition of extra pins to the dies in the first perforator. That accounts for the three known types of the perfins.



Mint examples of the perfin are none too common, but used copies with dated cancels are downright scarce and copies used legitimately on cover probably fall into the rare category. Schwerdt adds a note of caution: the perfins are often counterfeited! We will have more on counterfeits later.